



About the Mad Housers

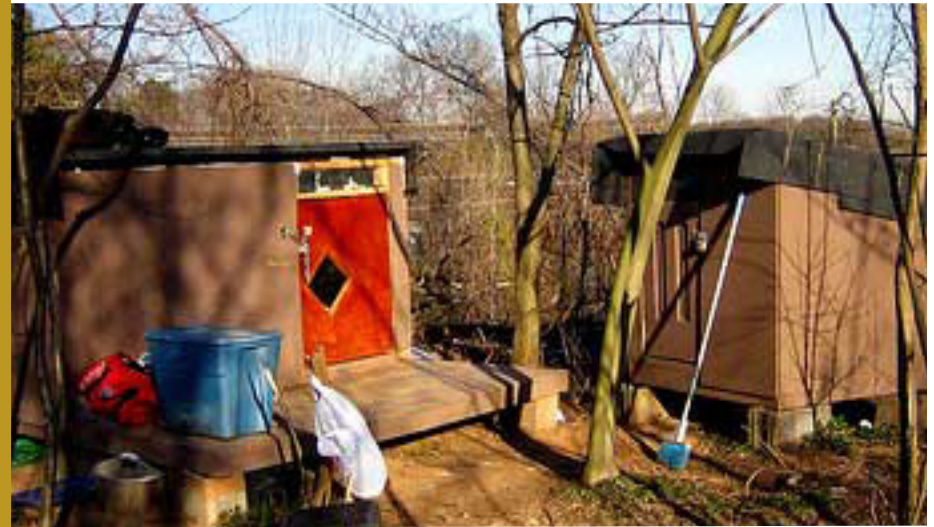
A group of Tech students started the Mad Housers back in 1987.

The History

The Mad Housers first emerged in 1987, founded by graduate students, Michael Connor and Brian Finkel, of Georgia Tech's College of Architecture to address the problem of homelessness in Atlanta. Their first projects were based on their vision of improving upon other types of marginal housing being erected for the homeless. Both Connor and Finkel investigated the causes for homelessness, citing multiple socioeconomic trends, such as the deinstitutionalization of mental health hospitals, the increased cost of housing, and the reduction of federal housing aid. Even in the early years, the group grew, changed and progressed in physical hut design, group organization and their methods of operation, as they constantly tried to improve. Based on their research and plans, Connor, Finkel and three other architecture students built the first hut. It was a small 6' by 8' by 6' plywood box with a bed and shelves for the client's belongings. However, it was dry and kept out the wind and the rain.

The organization had a major shift in the mid 90s as some of the original Mad Housers left the group and the next generation of volunteers joined. The group became more focused on maintaining the current huts. Members developed items such as a cogeneration power generator out of a lawnmower and a wood stove for the huts. Today the Mad Housers are still very active in providing shelter for the homeless and have panel builds and hut raisings regularly. Along with this, they do site recon trips to find new sites and "winterization" of the huts when they prepare the huts for the impending cold weather. In 2002, to raise awareness about homelessness in Atlanta, they built a hut on the Georgia Tech campus and slept in it that night.

The Mad Housers



Mad Housers, Inc. is a non-profit corporation based in Atlanta, Georgia and engaged in charitable work, research and education. The Mad Housers are perhaps best known for a hands-on, pragmatic approach to providing shelter to homeless people, in particular through the design, construction and provision of small (6'x8'x10') frame-and-plywood huts.

Professor Crawford's English 1102 class decided to build our own Mad Houser hut.

According to former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, the Mad Housers perform “the kind of civil disobedience I can get behind.”

As it turns out, we agree with Mr. Young.

- After reading several articles about the Mad Housers, our class became interested in this group of covert shelter-builders. We searched online and discovered that they were still actively involved in fighting homelessness in the metro Atlanta area.
- To better understand the work that they do, we wanted to build our own shelter. We planned and executed our build ourselves using Mad Houser online build plans and the advice of member Nick Hess.
- We then began a semester-long research project to study both the history and current status of homelessness, marginal housing, and this particular organization. All of this research essentially led us to one fundamental question: what is our idea of home? Society teaches us that a home is a five bedroom, six bath miniature mansion, but is that what home means to everyone? As we lived up to our English class title, each member of the class found poems or song lyrics, wrote a research paper, or initiated a project to try and answer this question. We present those to you now in our Mad Houser hut so that you may reflect on your own idea of home.



We present to you...

Our own Mad Houser hut in a digital version. Explore interviews, slideshows, newspaper articles, and more in our Digihouse.

Skiles 308 Dwellers...

Thomas Crawford, Chris Becker, Bill Bridgers, Nirouz Elhamali, Matt Ervin, Alexandria Evans, Ashby Foltz, Erik Gustafson, Alex Henke, Cory Johnson, Victor Lesniewski, Pete MacAluso, Alec Manfre, Daniel Murphy, Jonathan Walker and Lindsay Anglin

Interviews...

Experience what it's like to be homeless and hear from actual homeless people the Mad Housers have helped, as they tell their stories in moving interviews. Then listen to the Mad Housers themselves explain their mission and objectives in aiding the growing problem of homelessness.

Archives...

Check out archival information on the Mad Housers, homelessness, and other forms of marginal housing: Newspaper articles, Mad Houser build plans, music, movies, poems and lyrics about home and homelessness, a history of the Mad Housers, a history of marginal housing, a history of stoves and other energy sources, and much more!

For more info...

If you would like more information about the Mad Housers or wish to volunteer, contact them at www.madhousers.org. Also feel free to contact anyone listed on the back cover for more information about the organization or the project. Email any comments or thoughts to dwelling@gatech.edu.

A special thanks to the GT Honors Program for their support and to Michael Arteaga for creating our Digital house.